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C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 001468

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI

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TAGS: KDEM PGOV PHUM PREL EALD KU IZ KUWAIT IRAQ RELATIONS NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY FOREIGN RELATIONS CHAIR ON IRAQ'S
POLITICAL PROCESS AND IRAQI-KUWAITI RELATIONS

REF: A. KUWAIT 1467

B. KUWAIT 1449

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: Senior Advisor and Coordinator for Iraq Policy, Ambassador Richard Jones, met with Chairman of the National Assembly's Foreign Relations Committee, MP Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager on April 9. Ambassador Jones, who had just returned from Iraq, briefed the MP on the formation of the Presidency Council and general expectations for the Iraqi Transitional Government (ITG). Al-Sager expressed concern over Iranian involvement in the Iraqi political process and urged the USG to keep its forces in Iraq for as long as necessary. On Kuwaiti-Iraqi bilateral relations, Al-Sager complained that the GOK had missed crucial commercial and political opportunities by delaying the exchange of Ambassadors due to security concerns. Al-Sager said he is 100 percent in favor of debt relief efforts, and would support any such measure when it reached his committee. End Summary.

12. (C) Al-Sager opened the meeting by stating his concern over what he viewed as Iranian influence in Iraq. "I don't like seeing Da'wa in control of the cabinet," he said, referring to Prime Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari's Hizb Al-Daw'a Party. He said Iran had played a "big role" in the elections, which he claimed came much too soon. Demurring, Ambassador Jones pointed out that had the elections been delayed, they would have allowed Iran even more time to exert influence on the political process. Da'wa, he said, did not seem as close to Iran as SCIRI. Furthermore, the new government was a coalition led by the center leaning Al-Jaafari.

13. (C) Al-Sager said he was troubled by the Sunni population's boycotting of the election and by Shaykh Ghazi Al-Yawar's decision to accept a Vice President position, rather than fighting for Speaker of the National Assembly. He also expressed his disappointment that former Prime Minister Allawi, whom he praised for his effectiveness, would not be playing a substantial role in the new ITG.

14. (C) Turning his attention to the GOK, Al-Sager said he had asked FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al-Sabah why the GOK had not yet opened an Embassy in Baghdad and was told Kuwait was waiting for a new elected government in Iraq. Lamenting the loss of commercial opportunities, Al-Sager said that the bulk of Iraq-related business is now conducted via Jordan or Bahrain. "I think they made a big mistake," he added.

15. (C) Responding to Ambassador Jones' comments on debt relief, Al-Sager pledged 100 percent support, noting that any such decision would be referred to his Foreign Relations Committee. He suggested that the forgiven debt could be costed out through the completion of "big projects" such as the cleaning of the Shatt Al-Arab or the regeneration of Iraq's southern marshes. Al-Sager, who has previously expressed an interest in visiting Baghdad, said he would like to visit soon, and would be contacting Ambassador LeBaron to coordinate his plans with the USG.

16. (U) Baghdad: Minimize Considered.

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